

Awareness of Beneficiaries Regarding Public Distribution System/Food Security Bill

Diksha and Sushma Kaushik

Department of Extension Education and Communication Management, I.C. College of Home Science, CCS Haryana Agricultural University, Hisar 125 004 Haryana, India

KEYWORDS Rural. Urban. Fair Price Shop. Beneficiaries

ABSTRACT The study was conducted to assess awareness and utilization of various provisions under Public Distribution System (PDS) and Food Security Bill (FSB) in Hisar district of Haryana state. Three urban and three rural Fair Price Shops were selected randomly and from each selected FPS, 25 beneficiaries were selected randomly, thus making a total sample of 150 beneficiaries. Data was collected personally by the researchers through a well-structured interview schedule. Findings revealed that majority of respondents had medium awareness regarding objectives, commodities available and mandatory display information while majority of respondents had low awareness regarding eligibility criteria of Public Distribution System (PDS)/Food Security Bill (FSB).

INTRODUCTION

The Public Distribution System (PDS) was started by the Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Civil Supplies of India in the 1960s to achieve multiple objectives including ensuring stability of prices and rationing of essential commodities in case of deficit in supplies. The National Food Security Bill (FSB) passed on 7th August 2013 gives the right to the people to receive adequate quantity of food grains at affordable prices. The Bill has a special focus on nutritional support to poorest of the poor, women and children. The primary objective of the bill is to guarantee cheap food grain to nearly seventy percent of India's population. The broader aim is to alleviate chronic hunger and poverty in India. The State Government of Haryana launched the Scheme with effect from 20th August 2013. A total of 1,26,49,000 beneficiaries (49.89% of the population) in Haryana are covered under the Targeted Public Distribution System. In addition, pregnant women, lactating moth-

ers and children up to the age of 14 years will continue to get enhanced benefits under *Aan-ganwaris* and the Mid-day-Meal Scheme.

PDS serves as an effective tool of social welfare and directly contributes to the development of rural population at large and the poorest of the poor in particular who cannot afford to buy necessary and essential items from open market. According to a report of NITI Ayog (2016), PDS use has risen sharply in both urban and rural areas for the poor as well as the non-poor. However, several studies claim that the impact of the PDS on the poor is minimal. Dreze (2015) found that APL leakages were sixty-seven percent, while the BPL leakages for the two surveys were at thirty percent and twenty-one percent, respectively. There is a widespread consensus across researchers that corruption, inefficiencies, and limited scope are preventing the system from reaching its goal. Therefore, the present study was conducted to explore awareness of beneficiaries regarding objectives, eligibility for FSB, commodities available and mandatory information to be displayed under PDS/FSB.

Address for correspondence:

Dr. Sushma Kaushik,
Prof. and Head,
Department of Extension Education and
Communication Management,
College of Home Sciences, CCSHAU,
Hisar, Haryana, India
Telephone: 01662-255228, 01662-44880
Phone: 9896394882
E-mail: sushma.kaushik9@gmail.com

METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted in Hisar district of Haryana state. Three Fair Price Shops were selected each from rural and urban area purposively. From each selected FPS, 25 beneficiaries were selected randomly, thus selecting 75 rural

and 75 urban beneficiaries making a total sample of 150 beneficiaries.

A well-structured interview schedule was constructed for data collection. A list of various provisions and entitlements was prepared by consulting experts and available literature and responses were obtained for awareness of these provisions. Data was collected personally by the researcher by paying repeated visits to the area. Frequency and percentage were computed for analyzing data.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Awareness of Respondents About Objectives of PDS/FSB

Data presented in Table 1 reveals awareness of respondents regarding objectives of the public distribution system and food security bill. It is clear from the table that cent percent respondents had heard about PDS.

Regarding objectives of PDS, majority of the rural (73.3%), urban (74.6%) as well as total (74%) respondents had awareness about the objective, that is, "maintaining price stability" followed by "raising the welfare of the poor" (64%, 68%, 66%). Very few rural, urban as well as total respondents knew about objectives, that is, "rationing during situation of scarcity" (18.6%, 25.3%, 22%), and "keeping a check on private trade" (13.3%, 12%, 12.6%). Table 1 further reveals that majority of urban (76%) respondents

had heard about FSB while only 34.6 percent of rural and 55.3 percent total respondents knew about the bill.

Regarding the objectives of FSB, majority of rural (34.6%), urban (58.6%) as well as total (46.6%) respondents had awareness about "to guarantee cheap food grain" while very few respondents knew about the objective, "to alleviate chronic hunger and poverty" (13.3%, 17.3%, 15.3%).

Regarding awareness about distributing agency, cent percent respondents had awareness about the fair price shop as a distributing agency. Only 42.6 percent rural and 13.3 percent urban respondents had awareness about *anganwaris* as a distributing agency. Further, 37.3 percent rural and 46.6 percent urban respondents knew about schools providing midday meal.

Thus, it can be concluded from the table that although all beneficiaries had heard about PDS, few had awareness about objectives of PDS, FSB and *anganwari* and schools as distributing agencies.

Awareness of Respondents Regarding Eligibility for Food Security Bill

Data regarding awareness of respondents about eligibility for food security bill is depicted in Table 2. It can be seen from the Table that cent percent respondents were aware about the criteria of income less than one lakh per annum. As far as the occupationally vulnerable group was

Table 1: Awareness of respondents about objectives of PDS/FSB

| S. No. | Aspects | Categories | Rural | Urban | Total |
|--------|---------------------|--|------------|------------|-------------|
| | | | N=75 | N=75 | N=150 |
| | | | N (%) | N (%) | N (%) |
| 1. | Heard about PDS | Yes | 75 (100.0) | 75 (100.0) | 150 (100.0) |
| | | No | 0 (0.0) | 0(0.0) | 0(0.0) |
| 2. | Objectives of PDS | Maintaining price stability | 55 (73.3) | 56 (74.6) | 111 (74.0) |
| | | Raising the welfare of the poor by providing access to basic foods at reasonable prices to the poor people | 48 (64.0) | 51 (68.0) | 99 (66.0) |
| | | Rationing during situations of scarcity | 14 (18.6) | 19 (25.3) | 33 (22.0) |
| | | Keeping a check on private trade | 10 (13.3) | 9 (12.0) | 19 (12.6) |
| 3. | Heard about FSB | Yes | 26 (34.6) | 57 (76.0) | 83 (55.3) |
| | | No | 49 (65.3) | 18 (24.0) | 67 (44.6) |
| 4. | Objectives of FSB | To guarantee cheap food grain | 26 (34.6) | 44 (58.6) | 70 (46.6) |
| | | To alleviate chronic hunger and poverty | 10 (13.3) | 13 (17.3) | 23 (15.3) |
| 5. | Distributing Agency | FPS | 75 (100.0) | 75 (100.0) | 150 (100.0) |
| | | <i>Anganwari</i> | 32 (42.6) | 10 (13.3) | 42 (28.0) |
| | | Schools (mid-day meal) | 28 (37.3) | 35 (46.6) | 63 (42.0) |

Table 2: Awareness of respondent regarding eligibility for food security bill

| S. No. | Eligibility criteria | Rural | | Urban | | Total | |
|--------|---|------------|------------|-------------|---------|---------|---------|
| | | N=75 | | N=75 | | N=150 | |
| | | N (%) | N (%) | N (%) | N (%) | N (%) | N (%) |
| 1. | Resident of resettlement colony | 0 (0.0) | 36 (48.0) | 36 (24.0) | 0 (0.0) | 0 (0.0) | 0 (0.0) |
| 2. | Resident of notified abodes in rural villages | 0 (0.0) | 0 (0.0) | 0 (0.0) | 0 (0.0) | 0 (0.0) | 0 (0.0) |
| 3. | Shelter less | 2 (2.6) | 49 (65.3) | 51 (34.0) | 0 (0.0) | 0 (0.0) | 0 (0.0) |
| 4. | Transgender | 0 (0.0) | 0 (0.0) | 0 (0.0) | 0 (0.0) | 0 (0.0) | 0 (0.0) |
| 5. | Disabled person | 0 (0.0) | 1 (1.3) | 1 (0.6) | 0 (0.0) | 0 (0.0) | 0 (0.0) |
| 6. | Single women | 23 (30.6) | 19 (25.3) | 42 (28.0) | 0 (0.0) | 0 (0.0) | 0 (0.0) |
| 7. | Children living without protection | 0 (0.0) | 0 (0.0) | 0 (0.0) | 0 (0.0) | 0 (0.0) | 0 (0.0) |
| 8. | Occupationally vulnerable group | 69 (92.0) | 57 (76.0) | 126 (84.0) | 0 (0.0) | 0 (0.0) | 0 (0.0) |
| 9. | Income of less than Rs. One Lakh per annum | 75 (100.0) | 75 (100.0) | 150 (100.0) | 0 (0.0) | 0 (0.0) | 0 (0.0) |
| 10. | Pregnant women | 24 (32.0) | 0 (0.0) | 24 (16.0) | 0 (0.0) | 0 (0.0) | 0 (0.0) |
| 11. | Lactating mothers | 15 (20.0) | 0 (0.0) | 15 (10.0) | 0 (0.0) | 0 (0.0) | 0 (0.0) |
| 12. | Children (6 months to 14 years) | 18 (24.0) | 28 (37.3) | 46 (30.6) | 0 (0.0) | 0 (0.0) | 0 (0.0) |

concerned, a huge majority of rural (92%), urban (76%) as well as total (84%) respondents were aware about this criterion. Regarding the eligibility criteria for single women, about one fourth of the respondents (30.6%, 25.3%, 28%, respectively) were aware. Regarding pregnant and lactating mothers although few rural respondents at thirty-two percent and twenty percent respectively, knew about this criterion, none of the urban respondents had any awareness about this, perhaps because there were no *anganwari* in urban India. Further, twenty-four percent rural and 37.3 percent urban respondents were aware that children (6 month to 14 years) were eligible to get food under food security bill. Very few rural, urban as well as total respondents were aware about the criteria of shelter less (2.6%, 65.3%, 34%), resident of resettlement colony (0%, 48%, 24%) and disabled person (0%, 1.3%, 0.6%). None of the rural or urban respondents was aware about the criteria of resident of notified abodes in rural villages, transgender and children living without protection. None of rural respondents knew about the criteria of resident of slums/resettlement colony and disabled person while forty-eight percent and 1.3 percent urban respondents were aware about these criteria respectively. Justice Wadhwa Committee (2009) also suggested that awareness among the people must be created regarding entitlement of various categories of the beneficiaries, rates of the commodities to be charged by the FPS dealer, so that people can know their rights and entitlements and to enlighten the people of their rights and entitlements, pamphlets, posters must be published and widely circulated.

Thus, it can be seen from the Table that a huge majority of respondents were aware about the criteria of income, occupationally vulnerable group while a very few respondents were aware about the criteria of shelter less, resident of resettlement colony, children (6 months to 14 years), single women, pregnant women, lactating mother and disabled person.

Awareness Regarding Commodities Available Under PDS/FSB

Awareness of respondents regarding commodities available under PDS/FSB has been presented in Table 3. Regarding type of commodities available, cent percent respondents were aware about availability of wheat, pulses, sugar and kerosene, whereas majority of respondents were aware about availability of rice (80%, 78.6%, 79.3% respectively). None of the respondents were aware about coarse grain. It can be seen from the Table that cent percent rural as well as urban respondents were aware about cost of wheat, majority of rural (74.6%), urban (76%) and total (75.3%) respondents knew about cost of pulses and a very few rural, urban as well as total respondents knew about cost of sugar (16%, 14.6%, 15.3% respectively), kerosene (9.3%, 12%, 10.6% respectively) and rice (18.6%, 26.6%, 22.6% respectively).

Regarding awareness about quantity of commodities for AAY category, majority of rural (78.6%), urban (80%) as well as total (79.3%) respondents were aware about the quantity of wheat. Most of rural, urban as well as total respondents knew about quantity of pulses (40%, 53.3%, 46.6%) and quantity of sugar (53.3%,

Table 3: Awareness regarding commodities available under PDS/FSB

| S. No. | Aspects | Category | Rural | Urban | Total |
|--------|-------------------------------|-------------------------|------------|------------|-------------|
| | | | N=75 | N=75 | N=150 |
| | | | N (%) | N (%) | N (%) |
| 1. | Type of Commodities Available | Wheat | 75 (100.0) | 75 (100.0) | 150 (100.0) |
| | | Pulses | 75 (100.0) | 75 (100.0) | 150 (100.0) |
| | | Sugar | 75 (100.0) | 75 (100.0) | 150 (100.0) |
| | | Kerosene | 75 (100.0) | 75 (100.0) | 150 (100.0) |
| | | Rice* | 60 (80.0) | 59 (78.6) | 119 (79.3) |
| 2. | Cost of Commodities | Coarse grain* | 0 (0.0) | 0 (0.0) | 0 (0.0) |
| | | Wheat (2Rs./kg) | 75 (100.0) | 75 (100.0) | 150 (100.0) |
| | | Pulses (20Rs./kg) | 56 (74.6) | 57 (76) | 113 (75.3) |
| | | Sugar (13.5Rs./kg) | 12 (16) | 11 (14.6) | 23 (15.3) |
| | | Kerosene (14.3Rs./L) | 7 (9.3) | 9 (12) | 16 (10.6) |
| | | Rice* (3Rs./kg) | 14 (18.6) | 20 (26.6) | 34 (22.6) |
| | | Coarse grain* (1Rs./kg) | 0 (0.0) | 0 (0.0) | 0 (0.0) |
| 3. | Quantity of Commodities (AAY) | Wheat (35kg/House) | 59 (78.6) | 60 (80) | 119 (79.3) |
| | | Pulses 2.5kg/house | 30 (40.0) | 40 (53.3) | 70 (46.6) |
| | | Sugar 2kg/house | 40 (53.3) | 39 (52.0) | 79 (52.6) |
| | | Kerosene 6lt/house | 7 (9.3) | 11 (14.6) | 18 (12.0) |
| | | Wheat 5kg/person | 69 (92.0) | 70 (93.3) | 139 (92.6) |
| | Quantity of Commodities (BPL) | Pulses 2.5kg/house | 34 (45.3) | 40 (53.3) | 74 (49.3) |
| | | Sugar 2kg/house | 44 (58.6) | 39 (52.0) | 83 (55.3) |
| | | Kerosene 6lt/house | 10 (13.3) | 12 (16.0) | 22 (14.6) |
| | Quantity of Commodities (OPH) | Wheat 5kg/person | 42 (56.0) | 46 (61.3) | 88 (58.0) |

52%, 52.6% respectively). Very few rural, urban as well as total respondents knew about quantity of kerosene (9.3%, 14.6%, 12%). Regarding awareness about quantity of commodities for BPL families again a huge majority of rural (92%), urban (93.3%) as well as total (92.6%) respondents had awareness about the quantity of wheat. Most of the rural, urban as well as total respondents knew about quantity of pulses (45.3%, 53.3%, 49.3%) and quantity of sugar (58.6%, 52%, 55.3% respectively), while very few rural, urban as well as total respondents knew about quantity of kerosene (13.3%, 16%, 14.6%). When asked about awareness regarding quantity of commodities for OPH category, most of rural (56%), urban (61.3%) as well as total (58.6%) respondents had awareness about the quantity of wheat available for Other Priority Households.

Thus, it can be concluded from Table 3 that majority of respondents were aware about availability of wheat, pulses, sugar and kerosene. Regarding awareness about cost of commodities majority of respondents were aware about cost of wheat and rice. Very few respondents knew about cost of sugar, kerosene and rice. Regarding awareness about quantity of commodities for AAY and BPL families, majority of respondents had awareness about the quantity of wheat, pulses and sugar while very few respondents knew about quantity of kerosene. When asked about awareness regarding quan-

tity of commodities for OPH category, most of respondents had awareness about the quantity of wheat available for Other Priority Households. None of the respondents were aware about availability, cost and quantity of coarse grain.

Awareness Regarding Information to be Displayed Outside the FPS

Data in Table 4 reveals awareness of respondents regarding information to be displayed outside the FPS. It is clear from the Table that thirty-six percent of rural and fifty-two percent of urban as well as forty-four percent total respondents were aware about displaying the list of beneficiaries outside the FPS. It is further clear from the Table that regarding display of days or hours of opening, 53.3 percent rural and 62.6 percent urban respondents were aware about this provision. In aggregate also, fifty-eight percent respondents were aware that days and hours of opening should be displayed outside FPS. As far as awareness about display of contact number of dealer was concerned, majority of urban respondents (77.3%) and a little more than half of rural respondents (53.3%) were aware about this.

Regarding display of helpline or complaint number, very few rural (18.6%) and urban (34.6%)

Table 4: Awareness regarding information to be displayed outside the FPS

| S. No. | Aspects | Category | Rural | Urban | Total |
|--------|--------------------------------|----------|-----------|-----------|------------|
| | | | N=75 | N=75 | N=150 |
| | | | N (%) | N (%) | N (%) |
| 1. | List of Beneficiaries | Yes | 27 (36.0) | 39 (52.0) | 66 (44.0) |
| | | No | 48 (64.0) | 36 (48.0) | 84 (56.0) |
| 2. | Days/hour of Opening | Yes | 40 (53.3) | 47 (62.6) | 87 (58.0) |
| | | No | 35 (46.6) | 28 (37.3) | 63 (42.0) |
| 3. | Contact Number of Dealer | Yes | 40 (53.3) | 58 (77.3) | 98 (65.3) |
| | | No | 35 (46.6) | 17 (22.6) | 52 (34.6) |
| 4. | Helpline/Complaint Number | Yes | 14 (18.6) | 26 (34.6) | 40 (26.6) |
| | | No | 61 (81.3) | 49 (65.3) | 110 (73.3) |
| 5. | Stock of Grain | Yes | 9 (12.0) | 19 (25.3) | 28 (18.6) |
| | | No | 66 (88.0) | 56 (74.6) | 122 (81.3) |
| 6. | Entitlement of BPL Card Holder | Yes | 34 (45.3) | 50 (66.6) | 84 (56.0) |
| | | No | 41 (54.6) | 25 (33.3) | 66 (44.0) |

as well as total (26.6%) respondents were aware. Similar was the case with stock of grain where majority of rural (88%) and urban (74.6%) respondents were not aware. Regarding awareness about display of entitlement, majority of urban (66.6%), rural (45.3%) as well as total respondents (56%) were aware that it was mandatory to display this information outside FPS. Chandanshiv and Narwade (2013-2014) also reported that majority of the households (68%) under survey said that wheat, rice and kerosene supply is regular but the supply of sugar, edible oil and pulses happened to be irregular. Many a times beneficiaries are charged at higher than entitlement price at FPS, though it is significantly lower than the market price (Anonymous 2015).

Thus it can be seen from the Table that majority of respondents were aware about displaying the days and hours of opening, contact number of dealer and entitlement of BPL card holders should be displayed outside FPS, while very few respondents were aware about the helpline or complaint number and stock of grain.

Table 5: Overall awareness regarding PDS/FSB

| S. No. | Aspects | Category | Rural | Urban | Total |
|--------|-----------------------------|----------|-----------|-----------|------------|
| | | | N=75 | N=75 | N=150 |
| | | | N (%) | N (%) | N (%) |
| 1. | Objectives | Low | 32 (42.7) | 1 (1.3) | 33 (22.0) |
| | | Medium | 43 (57.3) | 74 (98.7) | 117 (78.0) |
| | | High | 0 (0.0) | 0 (0.0) | 0 (0.0) |
| 2. | Eligibility for FSB | Low | 74 (98.6) | 51 (68.0) | 125 (83.3) |
| | | Medium | 1 (1.3) | 24 (32.0) | 25 (16.6) |
| | | High | 0 (0.0) | 0 (0.0) | 0 (0.0) |
| 3. | Commodities Available | Low | 22 (29.3) | 3 (4.0) | 25 (16.6) |
| | | Medium | 49 (65.3) | 58 (77.3) | 107 (71.3) |
| | | High | 4 (5.3) | 14 (18.6) | 18 (12.0) |
| 4. | Information to be Displayed | Low | 44 (58.6) | 23 (30.6) | 67 (44.6) |
| | | Medium | 31 (41.3) | 52 (69.3) | 83 (55.3) |
| | | High | 0 (0.0) | 0 (0.0) | 0 (0.0) |

Overall Awareness Regarding PDS/FSB

Overall awareness of respondents regarding PDS/FSB is depicted in Table 5. Regarding objectives of PDS/FSB, majority of rural (61.3%), urban (85.3%) and total respondents (73.3%) had medium awareness followed by low (38.6%, 14.6%, 26.6%). None of the respondents had high awareness regarding objectives of PDS/FSB. Regarding awareness about eligibility for FSB, majority of rural (98.6%) and urban (68%) as well as total respondents (83.3%) had low awareness regarding eligibility criteria. Only thirty-two percent urban, about one percent rural and 16.6 percent total respondents had medium awareness regarding eligibility criteria. Again, none of the respondents had high awareness.

It is also clear from the Table that majority of rural (65.3%), urban (77.3%) as well as total respondents (71.3%) had medium awareness followed by low (29.3%, 4%, 16.6%) awareness regarding commodities available and very few rural, urban as well as total respondents had high awareness (5.3%, 18.6%, 12% respectively).

As far as awareness about display information was concerned, It can be seen from Table 5 that majority of rural (58.6%) respondents had low awareness while 69.3 percent of urban and 55.3 percent total respondents had medium awareness about the information to be displayed outside FPS.

Thus it can be concluded from Table 5 that majority of respondents had medium awareness regarding objectives, commodities available and display information while majority of respondents had low awareness regarding eligibility criteria. Pal (2011) found that ration cards are being mortgaged to ration shop owners and the beneficiaries are not aware about their rights. Babu (2014) also revealed that the government was committed to ensure food security for the deserving, create a hunger free India and reform and improve the PDS to serve the poorest of the poor. It is also proposed to extend the scheme to the uncovered areas of tribal groups and taking the advantage of mobile network so that the households can be informed about the delivery under PDS and thereby ensuring food security for the eligible.

Thus it can be concluded that though people are availing the facility of a fair price shop, they are unaware about many of the provisions of Food Security Bill and eligibility criteria. It may be because the Act has been passed in 2013 and is a new concept for respondents. Therefore, awareness regarding the bill and its objectives was partial as little efforts were made by the officials to educate people, and also beneficiaries were illiterate and had poor communication profiles.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The present study revealed that beneficiaries had low to medium awareness regarding PDS/FSB. Therefore, awareness must be created regarding objectives, eligibility criteria, entitlement of various categories of the beneficiaries, rates of the commodities to be charged and information to be displayed outside the FPS, so that people can know their rights and entitlements.

REFERENCES

- Anonymous 2015. Evaluation Study of Targeted Public Distribution System in Selected States. National Council of Applied Economic Research (NCAER). From <<http://www.ncaer.org>>.
- Babu ES 2014. Problems and issues in Food Security Bill. *IOSR Journal of Economics and Finance*, 5(3): 26-31.
- Chandanshiv MM, Narwade SS 2013-14. An evaluation of PDS in Maharashtra- A case study. *Excel Journal of Engineering Technology and Management Science, An International Multidisciplinary Journal*, 1(4): 1-10.
- Dreze J 2015. Understanding leakages in the public distribution system. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 50(7): 39-42.
- Justice Wadhwa Committee 2009. Central Vigilance Committee Report on Public Distribution System, State of Haryana. From <<http://www.pdscvc.nic.in>>.
- NITI Ayog 2016. Evaluation Study on Role of Public Distribution System in Shaping Household and Nutritional Security India, *DMEO Report No. 233*, Government of India, Development Monitoring and Evaluation Office, New Delhi.
- Pal B 2011. Organisation and working of PDS in India a critical analysis. *Zenith International Journal of Business Economics & Management Research*, 1(1): 40-48.

Paper received for publication on December 2016
Paper accepted for publication on January 2017