

block demonstrations has been started to cover 1000 unit of 1000 hectare each of five pulses crops in 16 pulses growing States of the country.

Report of IFPRI on poverty in the country

*72. DR. T.N. SEEMA: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) has portrayed an alarming situation of poverty in the country;

(b) whether it is also a fact that a large number of people above the poverty line are also falling below the poverty line;

(c) if so, the details thereof; and

(d) the reasons for apathy of Government to universal PDS in such a situation?

THE MINISTER OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI SHARAD PAWAR): (a) to (d) The International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) has released Global Hunger Index (GHI) Report, 2010 in October, 2010. The Global Hunger Index is based on a combined measure of (i) proportion of undernourished population; (ii) underweight in children under the age of five; and (iii) mortality rate of children under the age of five. However, it does not provide any estimate of poverty in the countries.

The Planning Commission is the nodal agency in the Government for estimation of the number and proportion of people below the poverty line by using the methodology suggested by the Experts in the field. The latest methodology for estimation of poverty is based on the recommendation of Expert Group headed by Prof Suresh D. Tendulkar which has submitted its report in December, 2009 and the report has been accepted by the Planning Commission. As per the recommendations made by the Tendulkar Committee, the All-India poverty headcount ratio for 2004-05 is estimated at 37.2%, whereas applying the same methodology, the All India poverty headcount ratio is estimated at 45.3% for the year 1993-94. This indicates an improvement in terms of poverty head count ratio across the country between 1993-94 and 2004-05.

Government is not considering to introduce Universal Public Distribution System as the focus on poor will get diluted. It would require procurement of huge quantities of wheat and rice which would result in less availability of foodgrains in the market, leading to rise in open market prices. If the same quantity of foodgrains is distributed equally among all, then the scale of issue will have to be reduced. Further, in order to manage the level of food subsidy, the issue prices of rice and wheat may have to be increased substantially from the present Central Issue Prices (CIPs) which have not been revised during the last eight to ten years. This may result in Below Poverty Line (BPL) and Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY) families getting reduced scale of foodgrains and paying higher prices.