

Recommendations of the National Advisory Council

On the subject of the proposed National Food Security Bill, the National Advisory Council (NAC) in its meeting held on 23 October 2010, finalized its recommendations as follows:

- Legal entitlements to subsidised foodgrains should be extended to at least 75% of the country's population – 90% in rural areas and 50% in urban areas.
- The priority households (46% in rural areas and 28% in urban areas) should have a monthly entitlement of 35 kgs (equivalent to 7 kgs. per person) at a subsidized price of Re. 1 per kg for millets, Rs. 2 for wheat and Rs. 3 for rice. Rural coverage can be adjusted state-wise based on the Planning Commission's 2004-5 poverty estimates.
- The general households (44% in rural areas and 22% in urban areas) should have a monthly entitlement of 20 kgs (equivalent to 4 kgs. per person) at a price not exceeding 50% of the current Minimum Support Price for millets, wheat and rice.
- The minimum coverage and entitlements as well as prices should remain unchanged at least until the end of the XII Five Year plan.
- Government of India should specify the criteria for categorization of population into priority and general households.
- In the first phase, food entitlements should be extended to 85% of the rural population and 40% of the urban population. Full coverage of food entitlements as enumerated above should be extended to all by March 31, 2014.
- Other components of the food security bill should include legal entitlements for child and maternal nutrition (including nutrition programmes for pre-school children, pregnant and nursing mothers, maternity benefits and mid-day meals for school children) as well as for community kitchens and programmes for feeding destitute and

vulnerable groups. For the new components programmes will need to be developed as soon as possible.

- For further advancing food and nutritional security, enabling provisions need to be considered such as measures for revitalizing agriculture, diversifying the commodities available under the Public Distribution System (PDS), ensuring universal access to safe water and proper sanitation, universalizing primary health care, extending nutrition and health support to adolescent girls, strengthening the school health programme, the programme for Vitamin A, iodine and iron supplementation and the national programme for crèches.
- An essential aspect of the PDS reform should be to plug leakages and enhance accountability. The NAC is examining proposals for PDS reforms including (i) decentralised procurement and storage; (ii) de-privatization of PDS outlets; (iii) doorstep delivery of grain to PDS outlets; (iv) revision of PDS commissions; (v) Application of ICT including end-to-end computerization of the PDS (vi) full transparency of records (including pro-active disclosure, transaction-based MIS, right of immediate inspection, and mandatory social audits) (vii) use of Smart Cards and biometrics subject to successful pilots.