

# Right to Food Campaign

## (Secretariat)

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Attended by Dipa

### DEMANDS FOR BUDGET 2017

The Budget for 2017 is being prepared in the context of many parts of the country are just coming out of two years of drought that resulted in hunger and starvation for a large number of people. The recent demonetization announcement of the government has added to rural distress making it difficult for farmers to find buyers for their produce and delaying sowing in many parts. Most of the rural population uses only cash transactions and the access to bank are still a barrier.

It has been over three years since the National Food Security Act (NFSA) has been passed and only recently has it been implemented in all states. However, there is still a far way to go for full implementation of the act. While ensuring the NFSA entitlements will definitely provide some relief to the people, a number of other measures are also needed. Full implementation of the NFSA also requires adequate budgetary support for all components of the act including PDS, MDMS, ICDS and maternity entitlements. We hope that the budget will take these into consideration. Following are some suggestions in relation to protecting food security:

#### NFSA - PDS

1. Provide the entire budget required for implementation of the PDS entitlements under the NFSA.
2. Although millets are included in the NFSA entitlements as an option, they are not being provided in most places. The budget must make adequate provisions for procurement of millets and its distribution at Re.1/kg (as stipulated in the Act) through the PDS.
3. With the increasing prices of pulses, its consumption (which was already low) among people has further decreased. Pulses are an important source of protein in our country. Hence, pulses must be included in the PDS at subsidised prices.
4. The pilot initiatives of introducing cash transfers in PDS, in the three UTs (Puducherry and Chandigarh) are all showing serious problems in implementation. The proposed pilot in and Dadra-Nagar Haveli has not even managed to take off. Based on this experience, the government must take a pause and work towards strengthening the PDS rather than putting undue focus on DBTs.

#### NFSA – Maternity Entitlements

1. The NFSA provides for a universal maternity entitlement for all pregnant women. However, such an entitlement is currently being provided by the central government in only 53 districts which are the pilot districts under the Indira Gandhi Matritva Sahyog

Yojana (IGMSY). In an affidavit filed in the Supreme Court, the Ministry of Women and Child Development (WCD) has stated that it will universalise the scheme in three years, starting with 200 districts in the current year. However, there were no funds provided for the same and hence the scheme remains restricted to 53 districts. The Budget 2017 must make adequate provisions to cover all pregnant women in at least 200 districts, with a plan to ensure unconditional universalisation within three years' time.

2. In the scheme for universal maternity entitlements, special provisions must be made for assistance and support required for pregnant women with disabilities.

### **Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) Scheme**

1. Universalising ICDS requires that the number of anganwadi centres (AWCs) be substantially increased in urban slums, tribal and hilly areas.
2. There has been no revision in the cost norms for supplementary nutrition after 2011 in spite of the recent inflation in pulse prices. This has resulted in a dilution of the quality of food provided. The cost norms must be upwardly revised keeping in mind the current market prices.
3. Further, the principle of inflation-indexing of all these unit costs on a regular basis must be established in the budget.
4. Budgetary provisions should be made for ICDS reforms, costs for a second worker, at least 5% AWC's being converted for crèches with extended timings as proposed under Restructured ICDS.
5. Provide budgetary support to women's groups and issue guidelines for 70% local/ decentralised procurement and production in the provisioning of supplementary nutrition in ICDS
6. Provide budgetary provisions for sensitization of ICDS workers on disability.
7. Special budgetary provisions should be made for refurbishment of AWCs. The NFSA Section 5(2) states that "every ---*anganwadi* shall have facilities for cooking meals, drinking water and sanitation". The majority of the AWCs do not have these facilities. There should be specific one time budget provision for ensuring this and regular provisions for regular supply and maintenance.
8. Reports of malnutrition-related deaths from tribal areas of Odisha and Maharashtra in recent months are worrying. A special package for tribal areas that includes comprehensive interventions for nutrition must be announced.

### **Mid-Day Meal Scheme (MDMS)**

1. As in the case of ICDS, sufficient funds needs to be allocated in MDMS to reflect the actual rates of food inflation.
2. Cost norms for MDMS must be revised so that nutritious items such as eggs, fruits etc. can be included in the meal, as well better provisions be made for payment of cooks.

### **Social Security Pensions**

1. Section 31 of the NFSA stipulates that "The Central Government, the State Governments and local authorities shall, for the purpose of advancing food and nutritional security, strive to progressively realise the objectives specified in Schedule III". The government must initiate action on this. To begin with, from the year 2016-17 budgetary provision should be made to provide adequate pensions to provision related to pensions.

2. NFSA in Schedule III, inter alia, in section (2) (d) states that provision would be made to “adequate pensions for senior citizens, persons with disability and single women” as part of food security. There is need to begin with a budgetary provision that ensures pensions linked with minimum wages and cost index.

### **Transparency and Accountability**

1. Adequate budgetary provision must be made for operationalising transparency and accountability provisions in the NFSA, including:
  - a. Social audits
  - b. Grievance redress including setting up of State Food Commission, training of GR officials, resources for awareness creation regarding GR provisions
  - c. Digitisation/transparency of records
  - d. Vigilance Committees

### **MG-NREGA**

1. Release Pending Wages: Immediately release at least Rs 3166 crore to the states to ensure payment of all pending wages, apart from mandatory delayed compensation.
2. Pay Delayed Compensation: Ensure that wages are paid on time within the stipulated 15 days or delays compensated (0.05% per day) as mandated in the law. In FY 2016-17 less than half (48 percent) of wages were paid on time.
3. Provide NREGA Work and Unemployment Allowance: Atleast 6 million households who demanded work in FY 2016-17 have not been provided any employment, in a year severe drought. Immediately employ households and provide unemployment allowance (half the wages beyond 30 days delays), as per the law.

### **Interventions for Supporting Farmers and Enhancing Food Production**

1. Budgets for supporting labour costs and input costs for subsistence food-producing farmers targeting women farmers.
2. Provision must be made for coverage of small and marginal farmers, lease holders and share croppers for kisan credit cards.
3. Special drive to ensure registration of marginalised groups such as women farmers and agricultural labour, salt pan harvesters, farmers with disabilities for social security and access to agricultural support must be ensured.
4. Procure at and guarantee minimum support prices for pulses and oilseeds.
5. Make available locally produced pulses and edible oils in PDS
6. Introduce measures to move away from import-dependence for pulses and edible oils by enhancing production, productivity and profitability of these crops.

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