

FAMILIES PURCHASING GRAINS FROM GOVERNMENT FAIR-PRICE SHOPS

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The Agro-Economic Research Unit of the Gokhale Institute of Politics & Economics undertook a detailed study of the working and the clientele of government fair-price-shops in Poona during 1957. The three main aspects studied were: firstly, the scheme as per official records; secondly, the trading activity of the shop-keepers who were entrusted with the distribution of grains; and thirdly, the ultimate aspect of consumption by the public purchasing at least a part of their supplies at a reasonable price. In this article, only the third aspect relating to clientele of the fair-price-shops is covered.

To study the economic conditions and the food consumption pattern of families purchasing grains from the fair-price-shops, a small enquiry was carried out during October-November 1957, covering a period of about one and a half months. The enquiry was restricted to only one ward of the Poona city, Shukrawar Peth. The sample families selected for the purpose of enquiry were only those who purchased fair-price (F.P.) grains during August 1957 from any one of the six fair-price-shops in that ward. Information was also collected from another set of families not purchasing F.P. grains from these six fair-price-shops with the purpose of comparing the purchases and the buying-habits of both the types of families. These two types of families are hereafter termed as F.P. and non-F.P. families respectively.

The data were collected by two investigators. A common questionnaire was used for both the sets of families covered by them. The questionnaire was divided into two parts. The first part covers general questions on the composition, economic condition of the family, the opinion of the head of the family regarding the quantity and quality of the grain supplied through the F.P. shops and the method of working of these shops. etc. The second part deals with the actual quantitative information regarding the purchase of main cereals, pulses and other selected items, and the proportion of grain purchased through F.P. shops.

As a frame for selection of F.P. families, a list of families was prepared on the basis of the details obtained from the cash-memos issued to the customers of F.P. grains by the six F.P. shops. The list covered 2,666 families including 557 from the near-by villages. For the purpose of detailed enquiry these 557 families from the villages were excluded and it was decided to investigate about 150 families out of the remaining 2,109